

House Bill 495

By: Representatives Dickey of the 134th, Burns of the 159th, Meeks of the 178th, Hagan of the 156th, Greene of the 154th, and others

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 To amend Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to education, so as to
2 repeal Chapter 18, relating to the Center for Rural Prosperity and Innovation; to amend
3 Title 2 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to agriculture, so as to transfer the
4 Center for Rural Prosperity and Innovation to the Department of Agriculture; to provide for
5 a director; to provide for assumption of business and responsibilities of the Centers of
6 Innovation Agribusiness and collaboration with other entities; to provide for the Georgia
7 Rural Development Council; to provide for duties and satellite offices; to provide for funds;
8 to provide for reporting and approval of strategic plans; to provide for related matters; to
9 repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

10 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

11 **SECTION 1.**

12 Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to education, is amended by
13 repealing Chapter 18, relating to the Center for Rural Prosperity and Innovation, in its
14 entirety.

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38 2-24-3.

39 (a) The Center for Rural Prosperity and Innovation shall include a council, to be known
40 and designated as the Georgia Rural Development Council, that shall offer guidance to the
41 Center for Rural Prosperity and Innovation.

42 (b) The Georgia Rural Development Council shall be composed of 12 members who shall
43 be appointed as follows:

44 (1) Six members shall be appointed by the Governor which six members, by majority
45 vote, shall appoint one of such members to serve as the chairperson of the council. Each
46 of the six shall be selected to represent one of the following areas:

47 (A) Leadership management;

48 (B) Business development and entrepreneurship;

49 (C) Finance and taxes;

50 (D) Logistics of rural industries;

51 (E) Healthcare; and

52 (F) Education;

53 (2) Three members who live in different geographic areas of this state from each other
54 shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives; and

55 (3) Three members who live in different geographic areas of this state from each other
56 shall be appointed by the President of the Senate.

57 (c)(1) Legislative members who are appointed to the council shall serve for two-year
58 terms. Nonlegislative members shall serve for four-year terms, provided that three of the
59 initial six members to be appointed by the Governor shall serve initial terms of two years,
60 and thereafter such appointments shall be for four-year terms.

61 (2) Members may serve consecutive terms without limit.

62 (d)(1) The council shall study the conditions, needs, issues, and problems affecting rural
63 economic development and shall examine related policy areas as it may deem necessary

64 and appropriate, including, but not limited to, population studies, access to healthcare,
65 infrastructure, education, unemployment, and economic growth incentives.

66 (2) All departments and agencies of the state, except the department, shall provide upon
67 request of the council services, information, and other support for the council and its
68 work.

69 (e) The chairperson shall call all meetings of the council. The council shall meet at least
70 once per quarter and each such meeting shall be at a different location within this state,
71 particularly in rural areas of this state, for the purpose of interacting with local government
72 officials, educational leaders, healthcare providers, business leaders, civic groups, and all
73 other citizens who desire to offer input, so as to enable the council to exercise fully and
74 effectively its powers, perform its duties, and accomplish the objectives and purposes of
75 this chapter.

76 (f)(1) Legislative members of the council shall receive the allowances provided for in
77 Code Section 28-1-8.

78 (2) Members of the council who are state officials, other than legislative members, or
79 state employees shall receive no compensation for their services on the council, but they
80 may be reimbursed for expenses incurred by them in the performance of their duties as
81 members of the council in the same manner as they are reimbursed for expenses in their
82 capacities as state officials or employees.

83 (3) Citizen members of the council shall receive a daily expense allowance in an amount
84 the same as that specified in subsection (b) of Code Section 45-7-21, as well as the
85 mileage or transportation allowance authorized for state employees.

86 (4) The allowances and expenses authorized by this subsection shall not be received by
87 the chairperson for more than 15 days and any other member of the council for more than
88 ten days per year. Funds necessary to carry out the provisions of this Code section shall
89 come from appropriated funds; provided, however, that funds for the reimbursement of

90 the expenses of state officials, other than legislative members, and state employees shall
91 come from funds appropriated to or otherwise available to their respective agencies.

92 2-24-4.

93 (a) It shall be the duty of the Center for Rural Prosperity and Innovation to provide a
94 central information and research hub for rural leadership training and best practices which
95 may include:

96 (1) Community planning models for proactively identifying value added gaps or
97 strengths;

98 (2) Industry-specific assistance; and

99 (3) Cooperative efforts with nonprofit organizations, religious organizations, and other
100 higher education partners.

101 (b) The Center for Rural Prosperity and Innovation may establish such satellite offices as
102 are necessary to accomplish its mission.

103 2-24-5.

104 All funds appropriated by the General Assembly for the establishment and operation of the
105 Center for Rural Prosperity and Innovation, together with any funds which may be
106 appropriated by the United States Congress or apportioned to this state from the United
107 States Department of the Treasury for purposes substantially the same as specified in this
108 chapter, shall be paid to the department and then forwarded to the Center for Rural
109 Prosperity and Innovation for its work, provided that the Commissioner formally presents
110 to the Governor the department's acceptance of the conditions of this chapter.

111 2-24-6.

112 In the event that the United States Congress appropriates funds to this state for the conduct
113 of work similar to that which is specified in this chapter, such work of the Center for Rural

114 Prosperity and Innovation shall conform to the requirements imposed as conditions for
115 such federal appropriations and as may be accepted by the General Assembly in order that
116 such scientific, engineering, and industrial research work may be aided and extended by
117 means of such federal appropriations.

118 2-24-7.

119 (a) The Center for Rural Prosperity and Innovation shall annually prepare and submit to
120 the General Assembly, for review by the House of Representatives' and the Senate's
121 standing committees on agriculture and economic development, a ten-year strategic plan
122 that outlines the use of the Center for Rural Prosperity and Innovation's resources for the
123 upcoming fiscal years.

124 (b) Said committees may, by majority vote, approve the plan and submit recommendations
125 to the Senate Appropriations Committee and the House Committee on Appropriations for
126 their consideration in developing the budget."

127 **SECTION 3.**

128 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.